

Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation conducts a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs every 3 years. Together with the State Rehabilitation Council's Evaluation Committee and a research analyst from the designated state agency's research team, VR began planning for the FFY 2007-2009 assessment in 2005. The resulting 2007-09 triennial assessment included 3 major components (#1, 2 & 4 below) and one supplementary source (#3 below). The next comprehensive assessment will be completed for the FFY 2010 state plan.

- 1.) **Statewide Survey** distributed to advocacy groups, community rehabilitation programs, supported employment providers, disability organizations, psychosocial rehabilitation centers, centers for independent living, various state agencies, 121 projects, disability support services in the North Dakota university system, occupational therapy departments, directors of special education, Client Assistance Program, SRC and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) members, and local Chambers of Commerce. The survey was also available to all other interested persons.
- 2.) **Statewide Focus Groups.** The Focus groups were co-sponsored by North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation and the North Dakota Center for People with Disabilities at Minot State University and facilitated by the Consensus Council Inc. A total of seven Focus Groups were conducted across the state. They were designed to identify the needs of groups who have been considered unserved or underserved by Vocational Rehabilitation. Three of the Focus Groups were for individuals with Mental Illness, three for Native Americans with disabilities and one for new Americans with disabilities.
- 3.) The Designated State Agency (DSA) also conducted **Statewide Stakeholder Meetings** to identify department-wide needs. Nothing specific to VR was identified in the report generated by the DSA.
- 4.) **Statewide Survey Regarding Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP).** North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation conducted a statewide survey of vocational rehabilitation staff in 2004 with a follow-up survey in 2006. The purpose was to collect information on services provided by community rehabilitation programs throughout the state, including any service improvement or training needs identified by VR staff.

Valuable and substantial information on current needs was provided by individuals with disabilities, advocacy groups, community rehabilitation programs, centers for independent living, special education professionals, and numerous other stakeholder agencies and organizations.

The Needs Assessment Surveys and Focus Groups were conducted in January & February 2006. The SRC Evaluation Committee reviewed the information and held two meetings in April to discuss the results. The Committee requested a further breakdown

of the survey results pending final recommendations. In May 2006 North Dakota held its first-ever joint SRC and SILC meeting. At that time the SRC Evaluation Committee presented its preliminary findings to both Councils on the results of their analysis.

The table below contains the major rehabilitation needs that were identified by Vocational Rehabilitation and the State Rehabilitation Council's Evaluation Committee. The results were accepted by the SRC and SILC.

The needs include those identified by or on behalf of individuals with all types of disabilities including individuals with the most severe disabilities, minorities, individuals who may be underserved and individuals served through the state's Workforce Investment system. Individuals who are considered underserved are frequently individuals who have a mental illness and those who have traumatic brain injuries.

The rehabilitation needs cut across all types and "categories". With the exception of increased cultural understanding for individuals who are minorities, no needs were unique to any one of the groups for whom the triennial assessment was conducted. Rather, the unique needs are identified with each individual during the vocational rehabilitation process.

Many of the major rehabilitation needs are systemic in nature and apply one way or another to every individual with a disability who receives VR services.

Rehabilitation Need	Most Severe Disability	WIA	Unserved & Underserved	Minorities
Assistive Technology	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased Cultural Understanding				✓
Increased Employment Opportunities in the Community	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased Self Employment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increasing VR's visibility through a massive public education campaign	✓		✓	✓
Job Coaching	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medical and Other Benefits*	✓		✓	
Transition Services	✓	✓	✓	✓
Transportation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocational Guidance and Counseling	✓	✓	✓	✓

*The fear of losing medical benefits through SSI and SSDI is a deep concern and employment disincentive for many people. This is true for individuals with a mental illness who need on-going medication as well as individuals with various physical and medical conditions who require on-going medication, medical durable equipment and ongoing medical care.

Based on information from the Department of Public Instruction in 2007, there are 655 students in Special Education who are between the ages of 18-21. These individuals could potentially receive supported employment or Title 1 services during the next one to three years. Some of the major disability categories of these students include the following:

Specific Learning Disabilities	270
Developmental Disabilities/Mental Retardation	190
Severe Mental Illness/Emotional Disturbance	46
Sensory Impairments	67
Other Health Impairment.....	48
Autism.....	18
Orthopedic Impairment.....	9
Traumatic Brain Injury	7

Assessment Of The Need To Establish, Develop Or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.

North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation conducted a statewide survey of vocational rehabilitation staff in 2004 with a follow-up survey in 2006. The purpose was to collect information on services provided by community rehabilitation programs throughout the state, including any service improvement or training needs identified by VR staff. VR staff noted similar needs during the 2006 follow-up survey as well as some areas of improvement.

Community Rehabilitation training needs were shared with the CRP RCEP for planning and training purposes after the initial survey. Results of the follow-up survey were also shared with the CRP RCEP.

The Statewide Survey regarding community rehabilitation programs identified the following major areas of need.

- ✓ Training in job development and job carving for individuals with all types of disability including those with multiple disabilities.
- ✓ Developing natural supports and providing the employer with the tools they need to assist the client directly.
- ✓ Marketing skills – being able to work with employers to "sell" the client and their program.
- ✓ Developing relationships with the business community, polishing networking skills and projecting a professional image.
- ✓ Disability awareness - disabilities other than developmental disabilities and mental illness, such as: physical disabilities, TBI, Aspergers, dual diagnosis, multiple disabilities.
- ✓ Better understanding of VR services.

VR has contacted the CRP RCEP regarding the training needs identified through the statewide survey and requested that training be provided or developed to meet these needs to the extent possible. In addition, VR will continue to coordinate with the North Dakota Training Network to coordinate and provided needed training. The Training Network is comprised of staff from Community Rehabilitation Programs, Centers for Independent Living, the CRP RCEP, North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities and Vocational Rehabilitation.

VR will also look at creating in-state training that would provide a general overview of VR services that could be provided to new CRP staff.

Additional discussion relative to community rehabilitation programs is found in *Attachment 4.8(c)(3) - Cooperative Agreements with Private Non-profit Rehabilitation Service Providers*.